



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

Welcome

once again to the place where printed word,
days gone by, clattering hooves on fog-enshrouded
cobblestone streets, and the internet meet
six times yearly at the Westmount Library.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, June 3rd, at 6:30 p.m. at:

The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec

Sarah Dawbarn (Cultural Attaché of the British Consulate in Montreal) will be in attendance at our next meeting as a special guest. We propose to ask Ms. Dawbarn a series of intriguing and probing questions concerning the Victorian world and the world of S.H. Come one Come all.

If You're More Comfortable in Braille, Please Have Someone Read This to You

The membership payment blight continues to strike at the most unsuspecting of Sherlockians. There remain a number of former members who still haven't paid their dues for this year. In case your strategy is: "Oh, well, the year's just about half over. If I wait until December, I can sail in like a hero, flash the cash, flash a smile, and not look back." Bad idea. We have some investment opportunities on Fleet Street and in Eastbourne, and we really do want you (and your lucre) on board! If you're not sure whether you've paid up, ask us at the next meeting. We know it won't be snowing, so we hope to see you there!

**If You're on Life Support,
Please Have Someone Read This to You**

Ah, the intricacies of tubes and the mysterious fluids they transport!
Ah too, the rhythmic pumping of the artificial breathing machine with its ever-so-dependable in-out, or up-down movement that extends your stay on this planet.
Now is the time to beckon with that shaking, skeletal finger at the overpaid caregiver doing the crossword puzzle beside your bed.
Beckon, beckon.
Whisper for your checkbook.
Whisper louder, she can't hear you.
Louder, I said.
There. That's better. Much better.
See? With no assistance at all, you can write that eighteen-dollar check to The Bimetallic Question.
You could have done it all along.
Long before things had to come to this.
So quickly, sign it.
Before it's too late.
Don't you feel better?
Spiritually, I mean.
Now I can take my foot off your oxygen hose.
Or not.

**If You Do or Do Not Own a Large Dog,
Please Have Someone Read This to You**

Suppose you own a harlequin Great Dane. Sire: Champion Majestic Shoeleather of Brinsley Common. Dam: Champion Finnegan's Sloe-eyed Daisy Dumpster. Further, suppose this aforementioned assemblage of badly-fitted black-and-white skin-and-fur arrived on your doorstep three years ago, with a fifteen-hundred-dollar price tag ribboned to his cute scrawny neck. Let us presume that your corner veterinarian assisted you in re-mortgaging your house so that you ensure for your little Tyrone all the medical comforts you never had when you were a pup child. Advance through the seven-to-one years as Tyrone charges through infancy, caroms into his foot fetish phase, and launches into ungainly adolescence which is where, apparently, he prefers to spend the rest of his short life. Little did you know that along the journey with Tyrone, you would receive your Ph. D. (Phooled by a Dog) in Economics! To this day, no one knows how that particular canine:

- a) suffered appendicitis;
- b) met that porcupine in the middle of the Mojave Desert;
- c) developed dew claws (You'd swear they weren't there when you wrenched him from his mom;
- d) developed hip dysplasia;
- e) needed to have those cataracts removed (you thought the gray film was due to constant exposure to the smoke from your neighbor's organically-grown weed);
- f) got out of the house and damaged that car almost as badly as he was damaged by the car;

- g) broke a canine tooth requiring cosmetic dentistry at Cornell;
- h) caused your pot-growing neighbor's cat to die of cardiac arrest a day after she had won best Persian in Show at Madison Square Garden at which time her owner declined a verified purchase offer of \$150,000.
- i) and other feats too numerous to mention with price tags attached in exponential array.

Our point here, dear friends, is if you do own a dog, is \$18 per year too much to ask for membership in The Bimetallic Question?

And if you do not own a dog, think of all the money you haven't spent. Certainly, somewhere, you can muster \$18!

The Next Quiz: The Adventure of the Retired Colorman by Patrick Campbell.

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, April 1st, 2004 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec.

Present: (Another bizarre coincidence: 13 breathing bodies around the massive oaken tables, just like at the last meeting.)

Rachel Alkalay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Paul Billette, Wilfrid deFreitas, Patrick Campbell, David Dowse, David Kellett, Elliott Newman, Lawrence Reich, Colin Semel, Derek Speirs

Regrets:

No one who was there.

CALL TO ORDER: Paul Billette, our new Sovereign, expertly opened the meeting at approximately 6:40 p.m. and welcomed those present.

- 1) The aging population of The Bimetallic Question wound the meeting slowly into first gear by introducing ourselves to each other. Again. This time, however, we did it in honour of our first-time guest, David Speirs. These introductions were conducted in subdued tones and full decorum was maintained at all times.
- 2) Derek Speir's introduction of himself was a treat, since although he doesn't look it, there is a modicum of the gothic and the Victorian about him. Derek informed us that he was a trustee of the Centaur Theatre when it moved from Place Ville Marie to the Old Stock Exchange Building on St. François-Xavier in Old Montreal in 1960, one year before the arrival of Maurice Podbrey who would become its artistic director and who also would change the face of English theatre in Montreal.

3) Other insights gleaned from these introductions:

- Patrick Campbell was sovereign of our society for seven years. Patrick cited the highlights of his tenure as the two colloquia on Sherlock Holmes, both of which attracted Holmesophiles? Holmesists? Holmesites? Homelites? Sherlockists? Sherleypheiles? Sherlockians? Sherlockaids? Shlockerein? Phyllisphiles? Philistines? from around the world. Part of the most recent colloquium was the magnificent play, *The Final Act*, a sweeping and probing presentation of the evolving and tragic psyche of Sherlock Holmes and the enduring faithfulness of his staunch ally and friend, Dr. John Watson. Magnificently portraying the complex Holmes was a famous British actor whom we have all seen on British detective programs, and whose name we will never forget. Equally unforgettable was the name of the playwright.
- Jack Anderson fell in love with the Sherlock Holmes stories decades ago, and has enjoyed coming to our Bimetallic meetings because he doesn't have to "dress up" for them. Jack is a good person to know, since he owns complete sets of historic Sherlockian radio tapes. Those of you who would like to appear in a velvet burgundy smoking jacket, feel free.
- Maureen Anderson attended her first Bimetallic mind-expander at the invitation of her husband Jack, and found it interesting. For quite some time, Maureen provided many different services and assists to the club, and continues to put the polishing touches on our minutes. Maureen's vast interest in Victoriana extends to the culinary, and it is thanks to her that we have been treated to recipes from nineteenth-century England.
- Colin Semel, who was actually a professional board-trotter back in England, was introduced to the Bimetallic by its co-founder Wilfrid deFreitas when they were trying to outsing each other in another Montreal Victorian spinoff, (correct me?) The Montreal West Operatic Society, which emulated the Oily Cards (D'Oyly Carte) company dedicated to the performance of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas (all right, guys, real *operas*, nothing "etta" about G & S).
- Stanley Baker, the unofficial impresario and director of human resources emeritus at the Bimetallic, was always interested in detective stories, taking after his father in this regard. Stanley grew up on Ellery Queen and Daphne du Maurier. He also grew up in England. Stanley's fondest memories of the Bimetallic include visits to McAuslan's Brewery and the RCMP.
- Laurence Reich claims to be in his "junior year" with the society and has always loved mystery stories. He's probably right.

4) First toast of the evening was to the Society (instead of to the Master), by Paul Billette, our Sovereign.

- 5) "Show and Tell" yielded some interesting goodies we hadn't seen before.
- A gold, brocaded burgundy slipper with glass beads à la Musgrave Ritual;
 - An old book with an illustration of Holmes and Moriarty wrestling to the death at Reichenbach Falls;
 - an authentic photograph of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, signed by him.
 - Roll over Beethoven:
Paul said a first edition of Harry Potter is going for \$25,000.
Wilfrid added that it was limited to 300 copies.
Fact:
The creator of the Harry Potter series is not Beatrix Potter. The Harry Potter author is now reputed to be a billionaire, and among the 50 richest women in the world.
 - David Dowse read a five-minute mystery for us to solve, "The Dirty Cap." David Kellett jumped on the answer immediately. The solution was: if four matches were taken from the left side in the matchbook, the person had to be left-handed. Now you can create your own mystery.
 - Stanley Baker read an article from the AP (Austin *Provider* or Associated Press) about a Christie's auction that would be thumping out some Doyle memorabilia. Thus ensued a spirited discussion on the right to bring these artifacts out of England. Naturally, our conclusions were inconclusive.
 - Paul Billette read "The Case of the Surly Bee-Keeper" in which a young woman lived in dread of her husband's brutality. Our very own David Dowse knew that Ralph Epton, the husband, was lying because the bee that allegedly startled Epton in the dark could not have done so because bees don't fly at night. (Quite probably similar to the punchline of a stand-up comedian in the late 1960s who informed us that a wet bird never flies at night.)
 - David Dowse, David Kellett, and Paul Billette also solved the mystery in our last minutes and if you can wade through the alliteration in the following conundrum, you will too: "The wafting wind wended waywardly."
 - Rachel regaled us with anecdotes of charming downtown Gibraltar. Apparently, before retiring to Eastbourne, the WMFCD visited the rock that gave Prudential its logo, astonished home decorators worldwide, and set up *the* authoritative décor shop, Sherlock Homes. You should visit. It's a scream. Other problem is, you can't find anything without hiring a private detective. And since none of them are as good as SH, there you have it. Another solution, another problem. Well, Watson, is the glass half-full, or half-empty? Wot? Rachel showed us a shopping bag from the store, and a mounted poster, part of "The Famous British Pub Sign Collection" of Holmes and Watson on Baker Street. Rachel found Gibraltar thoroughly charming, and the people very friendly. Is the place Spanish? Is it British? Only time will tell.
 - After the meeting, Maureen Anderson researched Gibraltar and came up with its novelty; the looming physical presence of its rock; its majestic command of the strait that separated Europe from Africa.; and the fact that the monkeys, despite training, do not speak English.

- 6) Our guest David Speirs asked, "Who was Conan Doyle? Watson or Holmes?" Most of those present agreed that Conan Doyle was Watson while Dr. Bell was Holmes. The conflicting opinions made for a lively discussion. You had to be there.
- 7) **YE BIMETALLIC QUIZ.**
Patrick won first prize with 48/70, a lovely wrapped book and according to him, "A book of very strange mysteries."
Wilfrid won second prize with 43/70. His prize was also wrapped and is even more mysterious because it left the room wrapped and unidentified.
- 8) **The insidious worm of impending spring.**
Several heated debates concerning the following caused us to be reprimanded by the librarian, and not for the first time that night:
- Why didn't Brunton the butler ask Janice for help?
 - Where did Brunton find the key? (Most members responded it was in the lock. At which point our guest stated that this wasn't really the safest place!)
 - What material was the crown made of?
 - Pebbles lose their shine.
- 9) **Momentous minutes in the waning moments.**
- Patrick mentioned that he had several membership cards in his possession, belonging to members who did not attend the meeting. He also showed the list of all memberships over the years that has been maintaining them. Maureen offered to type it and send it to Wilfrid to be placed on the official web-site for historical record.
 - Some trip photographs of the falls were passed around as well as photographs from this year's birthday celebration.
- 10) **Waxing literary.**
The deadline is approaching for the submission of articles and other printable materials that will go into our 25th Anniversary Slim Volume. It's up to us to make this an *oeuvre* to be proud of.
Patrick discussed the article he will be writing for the book.
Please think about what you would like to contribute: looking back, looking ahead, or just plain being in the moment. There's a lot of material and we'd love it if you would dredge some of it up and have your way with it.

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, June 3rd, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.